

Date: February 19, 2024
To: Members of the City Council
Through: Alexander D. Cahill, Senior Planning Manager, Planning Commission Staff Liaison
From: Kimberly A. Cameron, Durham Planning Commission Chair
Subject: 2023 Planning Commission Chair Report

In compliance with the Planning Interlocal Agreement, I am submitting this report on behalf of the Durham City-County Planning Commission. This report covers the 2023 calendar year.

Over the past year, the Planning Commission heard a total of 40 rezoning cases and ten UDO Text Amendment cases. 33 of the rezoning cases contained residential dwelling units, with 18 of the case having a small percentage of an affordable housing component. One case had a significant affordable housing component. The Planning Commission as a collective worked as a proponent for sustainable developments that were inclusive, contained components of affordability, a variety of uses/housing and were walkable to services/amenities. Durham will continue face challenges of equity, diversity and affordability if the trend continues that 88% of rezoning cases are comprised of townhomes with 2 – 5% of the units designated at 80% AMI affordability.

The hybrid format of meetings is working smoothly which allows the community to participate in public hearings via Zoom. This format provides an option for community members that still may not feel safe/healthy in public spaces and I'm sure is appreciated by the citizens of Durham.

Planning Commissioners have made a concerted effort to ask technical questions of specific cases prior to meetings, which allows staff more time to research for answers, commissioners to be more informed in their understanding of cases, and meetings that are more streamlined/efficient.

Three notable members departed from the Planning Commission in 2023, Austin Amandolia chose not seek reappointment, Carmen Williams no longer met a requirement for serving and David Morgan decided to resign prior to his term's expiration. Five new members were appointed in 2023: Talib Graves-Manns, Vikas Gurram, Edward Johnson, Kari Wouk and Chris Young. We have a recent new vacancy due to the resignation of Nate Baker, who is now serving on the Durham City Council.

The Planning Commission held five Comprehensive Plan Public Hearings last year and voted to approve said plan. Many of the Commissioners served on Policy Working Groups in 2022 giving input on specific sections of the plan prior to last year. With that said, Durham is still in desperate need of an updated UDO to match the community goals outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.

The Planning Commissioners participated in a Special Joint Session with City Council on March 1, 2023 to learn about the City's affordable housing initiatives and to discuss other hot topics land use topics the Planning Commission and City Council often hear in cases before them.

Planning Commissioners participated in our Annual Retreat on September 14, 2023, to cover several important topics. The first being a reminder on Robert Rules of Order and the Rules of Procedure; the second learning about different stages of planning, and the third a training called "Equity and Commissioner Decision Making" facilitated by the City's Equity & Inclusion Office. At the next Commission meeting a subcommittee was appointed to update the 2009 version of the Durham Planning Commission Rules of Procedure. A draft of the updates has been created and is now working its way through the Planning and County/City Attorney staff review process.

Kimberly Cameron

Planning Commission Chair